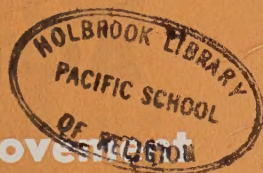
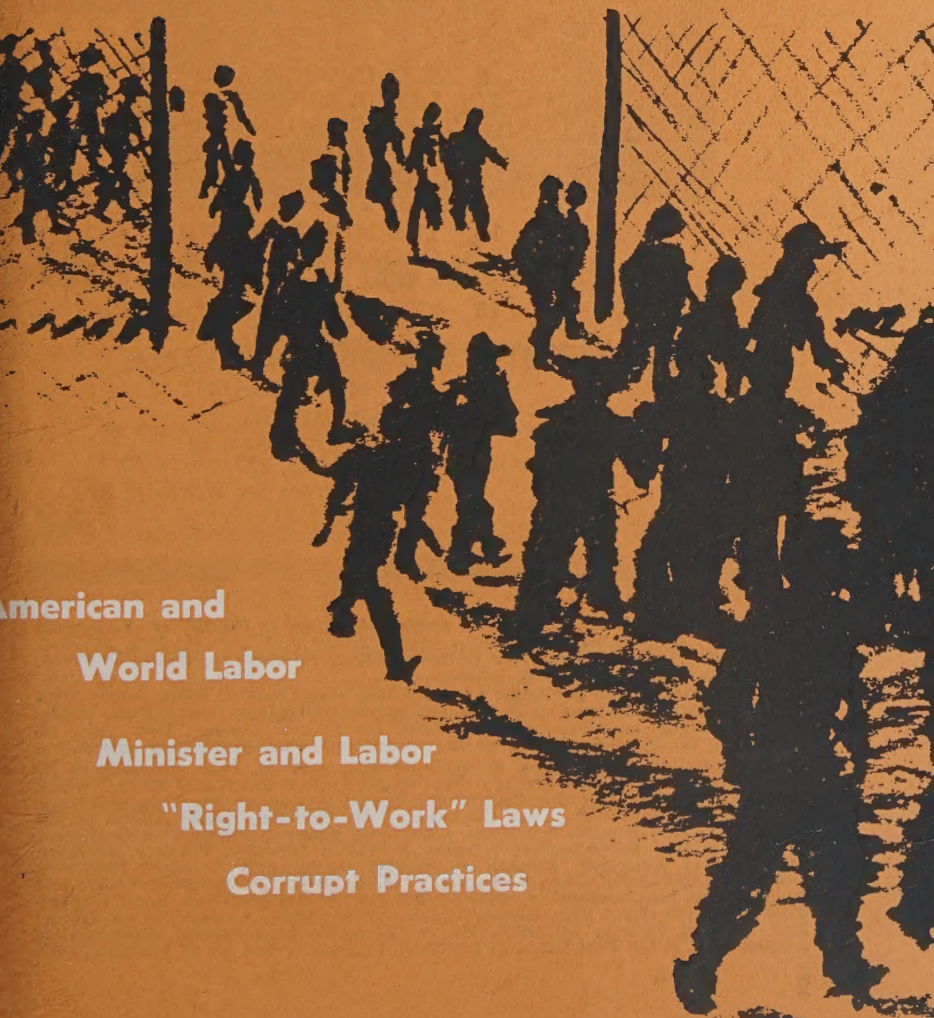


SOCIAL ACTION

A MAGAZINE OF CHRISTIAN CONCERN



the church and the labor movement



American and

World Labor

Minister and Labor

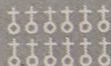
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the church and the labor movement¹

By Victor Obenhaus, Associate Professor in the Federated Theological Faculty, University of Chicago, and Chicago Theological Seminary.

When the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations merged in 1955 to form the AFL-CIO, there was both rejoicing and shuddering. The rejoicing was on the part of those who hoped for a united labor movement in America. The advocates of such uniting forces believed that only thus could labor possess the strength it needed to accomplish its chosen ends. The shuddering—if that is not too strong a word—was on the part of those who look with misgiving upon the formation of another vast center of power. They feared what such a concentration of power might do to the rest of the nation, politically and economically.

¹ This article consists of excerpts from "Labor and Industrial Relations," Chapter III of *The Responsible Christian* by Victor Obenhaus, published by the University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1957, 219 pp., \$4.00, and is reprinted with the kind permission of the publisher.

Many Protestants fear the labor movement

Americans in general and Protestants in particular have entertained varying attitudes toward the labor movement. In a large measure those attitudes have tended to be unfriendly. This is not difficult to understand. Protestant churches are heavily influenced by the agrarian tradition in American life and by a suburban middle-class membership that is likely to sympathize with management. They have never felt at ease with the labor movement, reflecting as it does the growing industrialization of America. Our roots until recently have been predominantly rural. A strong emphasis upon personal piety and individual righteousness in rural life has made it difficult for Americans to accept easily the fact that decisions affecting the lives of many people are made not by individuals but by powerful groups and organizations. We were accustomed to assume that good men make good decisions. Then came the labor movement and its leadership which challenged some of these so-called good decisions. The workers refused to accept wage rates and working conditions dictated by business managers. They even questioned some of the economic principles of those managers. To such heresies was added the fact that many labor leaders had foreign origins and their people did not attend English-speaking churches.

The problem of power

Few church people identified the problem as one of *power* and *responsibility*, yet basically this was what it was—and is. It remains the key issue in political and economic life. Religious-minded people in general and Christians in particular sense that the exercise of power is a moral concern. Decisions affecting the lives and experiences of people are consciously or unconsciously based on our beliefs about the nature of man and society.

Perhaps Protestantism's most unique and effective contribution to religious thought in America has been the Social Gospel. The type of religious emphasis characterized by that title represented an attempt in this country to cope with the evils of power concentration. The leaders of the movement realized that a process was going on which needed the ethical guidance of Christian standards. This meant subordinating personal gain to the social good. It meant developing counterforces to restrain those whose consciences were untouched by what Christ would

seemingly require of men. It meant a genuine concern for working people, hence the vigorous support of the labor movement. Though the Social Gospel reflected a much-needed emphasis in Christian thinking, we now, from a somewhat more ample perspective, can recognize that it was possibly using inadequate weapons and a faith of insufficient depth.

With the rise of large combinations in industry as well as of a united labor movement, it has become apparent that individual action, however righteous, will not suffice to meet abuses of power. Only what has been called "a countervailing power" can be expected to provide a balance and an approximate justice.

John K. Galbraith contends that "the operation of countervailing power is to be seen with the greatest clarity in the labor market where it is also most fully developed. . . . The economic power the worker faced in the sale of his labor—the competition of many sellers with few buyers—made it necessary that he organize for his own protection."²

Opinions of church people

Because so much emotion has been generated by the subject of labor organizations, it is sometimes difficult for Christians to see the issue in its larger perspective. But the church is not pro-labor or pro-management. If it is to fulfil one of its functions in contemporary society, however, it must be pro-justice. Church people, just like any others, are tempted to take sides quite independently of any factors of justice. However fair and righteous we may desire to be, there are influences that outwit us. There are some who, out of a deep loyalty to the labor movement, have sought to identify the church and that movement. There are others, formerly a substantially greater number, who have felt that the church must stand on the side of the employer and management. In both instances, where the loyalty is on a class or group basis, the Christian emphasis is betrayed.

This is, however, not the same as saying that the church as a fellowship of Christians never takes a stand upon issues involving labor or management. When Christians, individually and collectively as a fellowship, work to enhance the dignity of man or challenge a monopoly, they are not giving blanket indorsement to labor as such. They are working for what they believe

² *American Capitalism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1952), p. 121.

to be God's will for his children. Similarly, when church people side with representatives of management to break the stranglehold of monopoly or dishonest administration in a labor union, they are not by this act primarily indorsing management. They are struggling to achieve a workable harmony in society to save labor from its inner foes.

Occupations of church members

The composition of certain of our larger denominations reveals how the attitudes of Protestant church people are influenced by their work and by where they live. One study indicates that approximately 19 per cent of the total church membership belongs to trade unions (see table on p. 7).

Note that in many of the denominations the number of church members belonging to trade unions is less than the number in either the "white collar" or the "farmers" category. Also note that in certain denominations—Congregational, Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Methodist—the trade-union members are heavily outnumbered by those in business and professional activities. Add to these statistics the fact that the policies of many of the denominations are determined by representatives of the wealthier churches located in the suburbs and not by representatives of urban churches where the labor membership is greater. It is not surprising, then, that the Protestant church membership is but slightly informed as to the purposes of labor.

Labor leaders in the church

It is noteworthy, however, that the proportion of top labor leaders affiliated with churches is greater than the proportion in the population of the nation. This may come as a surprise to many people. A survey of two hundred top AFL and CIO leaders reveals that approximately 90 per cent of them belong to a church or a synagogue. The membership affiliation follows:³

Protestant	51 per cent
Roman Catholic	35 per cent
Jewish	4 per cent
No affiliation	10 per cent

³ *What the Union Can Do: Working with Churches* (Union Leadership Training Project Instructor's Manual). (Chicago: University of Chicago Industrial Relations Center, University College, 1949), p. 4.

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES AND TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP
IN MAJOR RELIGIOUS BODIES, 1945-56*

RELIGIOUS BODIES	PERCENTAGES BY OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES				PERCENTAGE BELONGING TO TRADE UNIONS
	Business and Pro- fessional	White- Collar Workers	Urban Manual Workers	Farmers	
Entire sample	19	20	44	17	19
Catholic	14	23	55	8	28
Jewish	36	37	27	0.6	23
Methodist	19	19	39	23	14
Baptist	12	14	52	22	16
Presbyterian	31	21	31	17	13
Lutheran	13	18	43	26	20
Episcopalian	32	25	36	7	13
Congregational ...	33	19	28	20	12

* Liston Pope, "Religion and the Class Structure," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, March, 1948, p. 87.

No canvass has ever been made of the total working population, particularly industrial workers, to ascertain the percentage of church affiliation. However, one does not need statistics to prove that urban manual workers generally do not constitute a vigorous and powerful segment of the church population.

The frontier of the church: industrial workers

As the great frontier of the church a century ago was the expanding rural geographic frontier, today it lies in the interpretation of the Christian faith to industrial man. And how well the church people understand the functions that the labor movement can perform may help determine how effective the interpretation may be. This involves not merely the church's supporting the labor movement but also its providing constructive criticism.

Here then is one clue to the dilemma—the people who comprise some 80 per cent or more of our churches do not know what lies behind the struggle of the labor movement. Parenthetically it must be said, too, that many workers are also unaware of their own history and purposes as a group. Obviously, both in churches and in the labor movement education and communication are urgently needed.

Of greatest significance is the fact that trade unionism has come to be recognized for what it is—an indispensable element in an industrial age. In addition, it is recognized that the real organizer is not any one individual, but the industrial organization itself—the plant, the mine, the industry. Thus the union has performed a fundamental service to the workers. It has made the worker “a free citizen of industry,” increased his participation and influence in civic affairs, and provided him with new opportunities for rising socially. For this reason unionism has helped to make democratic government a reality and has strengthened the workers’ attachment to democracy.⁴

Church bodies endorse the labor movement

Every major denomination in the United States has indicated its belief in the values and purposes of the labor movement. Presbyterians, for example, have stated that the failure to understand the contribution of the labor movement has led to much misguided criticism. The labor movement is necessitated by the deep wants of human nature and the basic character of industrialized society. The Presbyterians list some of the ways in which the unions have met these needs of the worker: (1) they have given him a sense of belonging; (2) they have afforded him a constructive use for his resentment against injustice and his demand for fair play; (3) they have helped him achieve a higher standard of living and better working conditions; (4) at their best, they have given the worker a chance to participate in the democratic organization of the union and have thus served as an agent for democracy; and (5) they have made available for the community and the nation the intellectual and social resources latent in the workers.⁵

Collective bargaining and industrial peace

But the hour-by-hour, day-by-day decisions in industrial relations are not concerned with the philosophy of labor, or of management, or of the theory of wages in the economy. They deal with the very mundane subjects of rates, working condi-

⁴ Lloyd G. Reynolds, *Labor Economics and Labor Relations* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1949), p. 446.

⁵ *The Church and Industrial Relations* (New York: Department of Social Education in Action, Board of Christian Education, Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.), p. 13.

tions, upgrading, etc. These are the fundamental issues of collective bargaining.

The history of the labor movement is a history of the struggle for the right to engage in collective bargaining. Because this process is indispensable to the achievement of justice and to the whole democratic process, the church has given its support.

When the National Planning Association sought to discover what made for industrial peace, they found that when firms accepted the idea of collective bargaining and entered into it in good faith, industrial peace was almost an inevitable result. In each of the various industries used as the basis for the study, however, an indispensable factor was the willingness of each party to the bargaining to accept the prerogatives of the other. Under the heading "A Positive Approach to Peace" the authors suggest "that an overwhelming majority of contracts between employers and unions are negotiated or renegotiated peacefully each year and without work stoppages. Strikes make better newspaper copy and livelier congressional hearings than peaceful settlements."

Mutual dependence, mutual responsibility

Mature and responsible persons have long recognized that labor and management are mutually dependent and responsible to the rest of society. In fact, one of the genuine apprehensions of our own time is the likelihood of collusion between labor and management and the possibility that the good of the rest of society will be overlooked. Fortunately, there are policy-makers in both labor and management who know that this can be one of the unfortunate and harmful results of the cooperative relationship between the titans. An increasing number of church people are also aware of the need for appraising all economic action against a standard of a just and orderly society.

The role of the church, then, in relation to laboring people is to insist on justice for all. Assured of economic justice, men are free to consider their own destiny and the well-being of their neighbors. As the closing paragraph of the 1953 Labor Sunday message states: "In working for civil rights, increased production, job opportunities, adequate wages, social responsibility, and a free world community, we are working for each other, for ourselves, and for God who seeks to realize His purpose of justice and freedom in the affairs of men."

American and world labor

Perhaps the greatest danger of the current preoccupation with our capabilities in the field of weapons research and technology is that we shall be diverted from action in another field where the Communist threat is just as serious, if not more so. That field is the classic domain of Communist intrigue: the workers' movements and the struggle for the minds and hearts of the non-Communist masses.

The lure of communism among the poverty-stricken

To see the current world struggle in black and white, to speak glibly of the free world and the Communist world, is to blind ourselves to the vital grey areas where freedom is lacking, where poverty and the evils bred by poverty are rampant, and where democracy can only be defended in the act of achieving it. These grey areas are the regions of the uncommitted, where somehow democracy must prove itself in the daily lives of people born in the shadow of our western world's colonialism, a system of oppression which has largely disintegrated. Stable regimes, founded on political freedoms and reasonable hopes of economic improvement, have yet to be established in these areas.

By Victor G. Reuther, Administrative Assistant to the President of the International Union, United Automobile, Aircraft and Agricultural Implement Workers of American (UAW) and Director of UAW's Department for International Affairs. Mr. Reuther has had a long and active career in organized labor in the United States as well as abroad.



It is in these uncommitted lands of transition that Communism, with false but alluring promises, hits vital targets daily because of the bitterness, misery, poverty, and disease of men, women, and children. Even in more advanced industrial areas of the West such as France and Italy, Communist parties and Communist-dominated labor movements have been able to sap the vitality of parliamentary government and isolate vast numbers of wage-earners from the national community because these national regimes and their citizens have not been able to strike a tolerable balance between freedom and justice.

Communism wins its greatest victories not because of its inherent strength or any intrinsic validity as a social and economic program but because of weakness and default by democracy.

Strategy for democracy

We can repair our weapons deficiencies much more quickly and easily than we can summon the will and imagination for an attack on the social and economic causes for Communist power. To launch and carry through such an attack, the alliances of governments must be given substance in the mutual understanding and solidarity of peoples. This does not mean propaganda crusades by the Voice of America or Radio Free Europe, one-way streams of words without deeds. It means fruitful, continuing collaboration in specific projects designed to change lives and minds: the decontamination of wells in Indian villages, the curing of ringworm, the training of native technicians, doctors, nurses, union leaders, the promotion of native trade-unions.

Contribution of the labor movement through ICFTU

There is no organized movement which is doing more in the practical realm to expose the Communist fraud and lift the Communist incubus than the free labor movement, through the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the International Trade Secretariats.

The ICFTU was founded in London in 1949, after the American CIO and the British TUC had broken with the World Federation of Trade Unions. The WFTU was a wartime counterpart of the American-British-Russian alliance; as the spirit of one-world amity dissolved in the harsh realities of the post-war struggle for Europe, the WFTU had become a Communist front. American labor had pressed for the European Recovery Program, and American unionists served in the Marshall plan missions. With the formation of the ICFTU, American labor was able to act directly, through a labor organization, to strengthen free unions wherever Communism was bidding for control of the workers' movements and wherever democratic regimes needed the stimulus of independent support and criticism.

In the years since its founding, ICFTU has expanded its membership and its activities. As the emphasis shifted from Europe to the underdeveloped and uncommitted lands of Asia and Africa, ICFTU's program of organization and training accommodated itself to the change, its regional structure permitting a decentralized concentration on the peculiar needs of specific areas. ICFTU now comprises 133 trade-union centers representing 58 million members in 94 countries. Its headquarters are in Brussels; it has branch offices in Geneva, Paris, and New York; regional organizations for Europe, Asia, and the western hemisphere; regional sub-offices in Brazil, Chile, Singapore, Ghana, Kenya, Trinidad, and Tokyo; and an Asian Trade Union College in Calcutta, India.

Through its European Regional Organization (ERO), the ICFTU has pressed vigorously for the success of the various projects for continental unity such as the Coal and Steel Community, the common market, and Euratom.

ICFTU serves a basic watchdog and lobbying function in relation to such bodies as the International Labor Organization and the United Nations and its specialized agencies. And it has become a kind of free-world conscience in the matter of liqui-

dating old line imperialist and more modern Soviet forms of colonialism and related abuses. Unembarrassed by governmental involvement, ICFTU has been able to speak out where official diplomacy has so often feared to intrude, advocating self-determination for Cyprus, independence for Morocco and Tunisia, workers' rights on Okinawa, democratic unions in Kenya.

All the while, ICFTU has been engaged in a long-term work of educating the cadres of free trade-union leadership in critical areas where such leadership is lacking. Beginning with training schools, conferences, and seminars in Europe, ICFTU undertook similar projects at Accra and Nairobi in Africa, in Guatemala, British Honduras, Mexico, and other Latin American countries, and in Asia, where hundreds of unionists have already gone through the ICFTU's Trade Union College in Calcutta.

American unions, through ICFTU and the International Trade Secretariats with which they are directly affiliated (Metal, Transport, Petroleum, etc.), have participated in this work of making the free world live up to its professions and its promise. Much of the effort is unheralded and anonymous.

Expression of practical idealism

In its international work, as in its domestic achievements in behalf of wage-earners and their families in the last two decades, American labor has found expression for the practical idealism which is of its essence, all revelations of the McClellan Committee to the contrary notwithstanding.

The corruption that has been uncovered in some American unions, while it is not representative, is a warning. It points to a more pervasive weakness—the “fast-buck” obsession—of much of our business society. Some of our more doctrinaire domestic primitives see in the current Senate inquiry a chance to bludgeon the entire labor movement into ineffectiveness. This would be a stupid and disastrous crime, not only against the overwhelming body of American workers and their leaders but against the nation in its competition with the Kremlin for the allegiance of the uncommitted millions.

American unions, through ICFTU and the International Trade Secretariats, are working at problems as difficult and important as any having to do with space. Here, however, the problem is less a question of space than of time.

the minister and organized labor



By J. Edward Carothers, Pastor, The First
Methodist Church, Schenectady, New York.

Many ministers feel that they are out of touch with organized labor and most of them wish that things were different. This situation raises at least three questions: Why do they feel out of touch? Why do they wish things were different? What can be done about it?

Why do ministers feel out of touch with labor?

First of all, many ministers may also feel, to a degree, out of touch with management groups, educational groups, and other organizations of special interest. However, this inquiry is concerned only with the problems of the minister and organized labor.

It is very difficult for ministers to feel in touch with organized interest groups because ministers are leaders of churches and every church is an "organized interest group." The minister is in some degree compelled to secure and keep the loyalty of church members by making them feel that their first and most important allegiance should be to the church. The very fact that a minister is required to maintain the solidarity of a group called the church tends to insulate him from other groups. It doesn't always do it, but it has that tendency.

The main reason ministers feel out of touch with organized labor, however, is that they inwardly fear labor unions. Most ministers would deny this but I still think it is true because, no

matter who we are, we have had labor represented to us in terms of violence, strikes, picket lines, and internal corruption. Ministers are against those things even if they were born and reared in homes where both parents were actively involved in labor organizations. Being against these things they fear them and, if they are ordinary mortals, will associate organized labor with those things.

The dominant portrayal of a class or group will affect the judgment of the minister much as it does that of the average citizen. By dominant portrayal I mean the portrait which is painted by magazines, newspapers, radio, television, and other means of communication such as rumor, cartoon, and physical appearance. For example, the labor hall is usually down a side street. Its entrance is narrow and more often than not the hall is on the second floor. If the minister visits the hall there are likely to be several men standing around asking questions with their eyes. Until he gets used to it, visiting the union hall usually gives the minister a mild shock. The labor leader's office isn't anything like that of the banker or the manager. At least it is not in most cases. In recent months, some labor halls have moved to Main Street and put up gold-leaf signs.

The minister's fear of organized labor is not a seizure of terror. It is mild timidity which activates the rationalizations he needs to go about his business without becoming involved with organized labor. Besides, he knows that most of his leaders also fear labor more or less in the same way he does. They would be a bit restless if they thought he had intimate relationships with labor organizations whose reasons for existence is to register the opinions of workers on such matters as wages, conditions of work, benefits, and political issues.

Why do ministers regret their separation from labor?

Ministers are not happy about the fact that they are out of touch with organized labor. They wish things were different and for some time I have been trying to figure out why they have this wish—a wish which I also share. The nearest I have come to an answer is in one sense a confession of sin and in another a confession of virtue, or nearly so.

A lot of us wish we were more closely in touch with organized labor because we think it would strengthen our churches. We are organization men and we have to secure the statistical suc-

cess of our churches. Let us not blink at this fact. It is no evil thing for a church to survive and be strong, but it is evil to seek association with labor with that as the dominant motive. So much for the confession of sin.

Once we have gotten control of our base desire to exploit labor for ecclesiastical ends, most of us ministers have a genuine feeling that the Church of God, whose Head was a carpenter and whose Spirit today is the captive of no class or group, is bound to fail if it becomes an exclusive fellowship. It cannot allow to remain outside of its circumference those whose way of economic life is in some respects in conflict with that of those within. The mounting complex of issues separating organized labor and management will test the ability of the church to bring them together in discipleship to the Christian faith.

Ministers feel that people in labor and management groups should be together in the worship and in the work and the life of the church; and when their hearts are pure this feeling is not for ecclesiastical ends, but for the purposes of individual and social redemption in the community of God which we call the church. Ministers wish things were different. How can they be?

What can ministers do?

The only way organized labor can truly become a significant part of the church is for the minister to quit thinking of the people in labor groups as being a special kind of human being. It is the minister's job to deal with persons as persons, and whether a man is a manager or a labor leader should not make any basic difference to the minister. Both stand in need of the means of God's grace, as does the minister.

This means, first of all, that the minister will not try to convince labor that he is a friend of labor. Should he sell his soul to win friends and gain statistics? Not so. Besides, the people in labor can see through the minister who pretends he is on the side of labor. They know what a minister ought to be and that he should not be on anyone's side. They suspect that his pretensions of being on their side are balanced by similar gestures to management.

What the minister can do is twofold: he can understand the issues that are of concern to organized labor; and he can see to it that these questions are raised in the mind of the church and given moral and spiritual evaluation.

When the minister leads his congregation into vital consideration of the real issues of life as experienced by the members of organized labor he will not feel out of touch with anyone. He will certainly be in touch with management and the general public if these issues are raised in the way they ought to be! A congregation which has the *acquired ability* to hold sustained discussions of the hottest issues of life as they are confronted by both labor and management will be in touch with both labor and management; and neither the minister nor the congregation will be the pawn of either group. And this is just the way the people in management and labor want it.

For example, the issue over the so-called "right-to-work" laws is one of the hottest issues between the General Electric Company and the IUE-CIO, but recently our church held a series of six discussions on this subject on Sunday mornings at 9:30. We had spokesmen from both sides and allowed unlimited questioning from the floor. We learned a lot. Some people who had not met the particular spokesmen from one side or the other experienced a birth of new friendship. The issues were opened all the way. No concessions were made. Christian standards were applied.

That this series of meetings could take place is due to the fact that open discussion is a habit in our church. Throughout the years it has been taken for granted that unless there is difference of opinion the learning process is not in operation. Laymen often say: "If we all think alike, no one thinks at all."

Let the minister be the minister

The minister can feel in touch with organized labor only if he is in touch with the whole community. He cannot maintain proper relationships within the community by becoming identified with special groups. The minister must understand that in the minds of labor he is a minister, not a laborer. He is the symbol of the Christian religion and if he tries to worm his way into the favor of any group, he will meet with suspicion and mild contempt. They want him to be a minister of God and they hope he will also be a minister to them.

But they fear he will not be a minister to them. He so often comes to them only with talk about unions, working conditions and the like. They would also like to know if the minister cares about their religious condition. *They* think of him as a minister

of religion. If he fails to think of himself in that same way, he cannot be in touch with those who are in organized labor.

I will never forget a word spoken to me several years ago by a man in management. We were waiting at a street corner for the light to change. He said: "I wish you ministers wouldn't spend so much time with the aged and the sick. Some of us need you more than they do." I have pondered that for years and then, not so very long ago, a labor leader whose name is known across the nation said to me as we sat together waiting for a meeting to begin: "The thing those of us in labor need more than anything else is someone to care whether we have any religion or not."

The minister and organized labor? We have been out of touch and we wish things were different. We have been timid, if not actually afraid. We have blundered so often in trying to touch labor with our sympathy for labor. What we ought to do is recover our senses and realize that people in organized labor need us as ministers of Jesus Christ our Lord. Just that. Nothing more. Nothing less.

"right-to-work" laws: pro and con

Should union membership be a condition of employment? These paragraphs are from Union Membership as a Condition of Employment, a statement prepared for study by churchmen. Approved by the Executive Board of the Division of Life and Work of the National Council of Churches in July, 1956, it has not been approved or disapproved by the General Board of the NCC. The complete statement is available from the NCC, 120 East 23rd St., New York 10, N. Y., for 15c.

In the days when trade unions were being organized, employers sought various ways to stop them. One method used was the so-called "yellow-dog" contract under which employees were required, as a condition of employment, not to join or assist any labor organization. This and other practices were made illegal by the Wagner Act of 1935.

On the other hand, unions sought to protect their position by making certain provisions in their contracts with employers. Among the forms of agreement used have been:

The closed shop requiring the employer to hire employees who are already union members.

The union shop requiring that employees become union members after a trial period, usually 30 days, and remain members for the period covered by the contract.

Maintenance of membership requiring that all employees who become or continue to be members after an "escape period," usually 15 days, maintain their membership during the remainder of the contract.

The Labor Management Act of 1947 (Taft-Hartley) makes closed shop agreements illegal for firms engaged in interstate commerce, but permits union shop and maintenance of membership agreements. It also provides that "nothing in this Act shall be construed as authorizing . . . agreements requiring membership in a labor organization as a condition of employment in any State or Territory in which such execution or application is prohibited by State or Territorial law." This allows the states to legislate requirements that are more—not less—restrictive upon labor unions than those in the federal law.

As a result of this provision, up to September, 1955, eighteen states had enacted laws, widely referred to as "right-to-work" laws, prohibiting management-union agreements which require union membership as a condition of obtaining or continuing employment by the contracting company. While not identical in language, these laws provide in substance that neither membership nor non-membership in a labor union shall be made a condition of employment.

This important question is one that should be viewed in its entirety because the issue involved is not simply the basic question of union



membership as a condition of continued employment, but it also involves a limitation of the process of collective bargaining. As far as possible the arguments, pro and con, presented below are in the language of those who oppose or support union membership as a condition of continued employment.

PRO "RIGHT-TO-WORK" LAWS

(Union membership should not be a condition of continued employment.)

Laws prohibiting union shop and other required union membership agreements are supported primarily on the ground that they protect the freedom of individuals to make their own choice in regard to joining or not joining a labor union. The principle behind them is neither pro-union nor anti-union, but one of the simple morals of freedom: that it is an obvious infringement of the liberties of men to require them to belong to any private organization in order to engage in such a basic act as earning a living.

Membership in a union is not necessarily related to the fitness of a worker for a job. Job qualifications involve ability and character, and these qualifications have little or nothing to do with membership in a labor union or any other private organization.

Membership in a union should result from the free choice of workers in response to the organizing activity of the union itself. Under required union mem-

CON "RIGHT-TO-WORK" LAWS

(Union membership is a valid condition of continued employment.)

The right of workers to organize in free unions and to bargain collectively has not yet won universal acceptance by employers; therefore apprehensions which unions have relative to their status are founded in fact.

The man who works is more than an individual; he participates, which makes him a part of a group. An accepted principle of democracy for group life is the rule of the majority. Under the law, unions are certified as representing all employees in what has been determined as the appropriate bargaining unit. Although the terms of a contract negotiated with a given employer are applicable to all the employees, individual employees who are not union members do not have the corresponding responsibility toward their collective bargaining agency. Required union membership helps to create and maintain union responsibility.

A non-union worker in a shop where conditions of work reflect labor union activity falls heir to

PRO (*continued*)

bership the threat of discharge becomes the most important factor in organizing activity, rather than the accomplishments of the union. Labor unions will recruit and hold their members purely on their continuing ability to work for the true interests of those they are supposed to represent and thus become more useful to society.

Required union membership may enable a single union either to spread through an entire industry or to gain control over certain kinds of business by domination of one essential service factor.

In the light of the above considerations and with specific reference to the issues currently raised by state "right-to-work" laws, it is recognized that either requiring by law or forbidding by law union membership as a basis of continuing employment involves grave moral problems. Under the varied circumstances prevailing at different times and places throughout this large country the National Council of Churches discerns no simple judgment on these moral problems upon which highly diverse opinions are held by dedicated Christians.

However, it is the opinion of the Executive Board of the Division of Christian Life and Work that union membership as a basis of continued employment should be neither required nor forbidden by law: the decision should be left to agreement by management and labor through the process of collective bargaining. The freedom of management and labor to negotiate such agreements without the restraints of "right-to-work" laws, however, places upon them a clear responsibility to observe basic principles and safeguards.

CON (*continued*)

benefits from the efforts and sacrifices of others. The worker who takes the benefits should share in the cost and effort required to achieve them. There is a fundamental difference between unions and other voluntary organizations because of the legal requirement that, as the authorized bargaining agent, the union must represent *all* employees covered by the contract, thus carrying the cost of processing grievances and otherwise representing the interests of those who do not belong to the union on the same basis as those who do belong.

corruption in labor

and management

This statement adopted by the Council for Christian Social Action of the United Church of Christ, at its meeting in October, 1957, condemns the practices of corrupt labor leaders and those representatives of management who co-operate with them; and commends the vast majority of union members for their work for democratic community life.

Within recent months the attention of the nation has been called to the hearings of the Senate Select Committee on Labor and Management Practices, of which Senator McClelland is chairman and Mr. Robert Kennedy the chief staff officer. Testimony at these hearings has alleged the existence of unethical practices on the part of certain labor officials and representatives of business which have involved financial loss for those whose trust they abused and occasioned grave concern for the moral health of our society.

As a Christian body, committed to the conviction that God wills justice in all areas of human life, we express our unequivocal disapproval of those leaders who take advantage of their positions in labor organizations to enrich themselves, to defraud or misrepresent their constituents, or to wield irresponsible power over them. And we condemn those unions, local or national, which knowingly have permitted such individuals to exercise power or have failed to maintain ethical standards and democratic procedures.

At the same time, we would remind all fair-minded persons that, evil as is any corruption in so important a social and economic movement, the persons and the unions charged with having engaged in illegal or questionable practices constitute a very small segment of labor taken as a whole. We note with appreciation the history-making steps taken by organized labor to estab-

lish a code of ethical practices; to discipline unions which have come under corrupt, dictatorial, or irresponsible dominance; and to cooperate with the Select Committee in ascertaining the facts about mismanagement and corruption where they were suspected or known to exist. We commend the vast majority of union members who have labored to make of their unions a force for economic justice, social progress, and democratic community life. And we affirm our conviction that labor unions contribute both economically and morally to our modern industrial society.

During the past two years, I have spent months within the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Of course, my material possessions were looked upon with great wonder and astonishment. . . . But that which was most envied was my freedom as an American to speak, to write, to laugh, to complain whenever I so wished. I learned that bread does not compensate for loss of freedom.

—RABBI JUDAH CAHN,
quoted from *Dateline*,
National Association of Manufacturers

We would further point out that the responsibility for corruption and racketeering does not lie exclusively with union officials who "sell out" their unions. It lies equally with those, in management or elsewhere, who have bought favors from such officials or who, not engaging in such behavior themselves, tacitly approve such practices by the industry, trade, or profession in which they are engaged. And, ultimately, the responsibility is shared by all of us who participate and acquiesce in those aspects of our society which put a premium on the making of maximum profits and the manipulation of man, in disregard of moral ends or human costs.

Those who have broken the law should have a fair trial and pay the prescribed penalty. But these disquieting disclosures will have been to no effect if they do not lead us all to repentance and to new dedication to the development of the "responsible society."

The Social Responsibilities of Organized Labor, by John A. Fitch. Harper & Brothers, New York, 1957, 238 pp. \$3.50.

This book is one of the series on *The Ethics and Economics of Society* sponsored by the Department of the Church and Economic Life of the National Council of Churches. Mr. Fitch has produced in a single non-technical volume a fair and balanced analysis of the functions, responsibilities, and problems of organized labor. The author is a leading authority in labor relations who for many years was on the faculty of the New York School of Social Work. He served as a public member of the National War Labor Board during World War II.

Responsibility is defined as a "state of being accountable . . . for a trust" not merely in contracts but to the public as a whole. Dr. Fitch does not hesitate to declare after exploring the dangers and malpractices in unionism that the facts establish "the necessity of trade unions in modern industrial society." He finds that "as an economic force they constitute the machinery by which thousands of individuals, powerless as such, are enabled to participate

in the making of decisions that affect them in the primary business of making a living."

Scope of the book

The areas of union activity are outlined as: bargaining with employers, providing non-bargained services for members, and acting in public affairs. The struggle for recognition of unions is traced and the legal and sociological obstacles that had to be overcome are presented as continuing to color the attitudes and anxieties of labor today.

The book discusses union objectives, the method of collective bargaining, the use of the strike, the demands for union security, and the cases both for and against compulsory membership. In some of the most illuminating sections of the book, Dr. Fitch wades into the most controversial issues. He does not argue against the point made by Professor Boulding in an earlier book of the series that there is no evidence that unions have helped to raise wages as a whole but does insist on the effectiveness of union action in pulling many groups of workers, such as the Pullman porters, out of substandard levels.

Dangers and weaknesses in the labor movement

The dangers of the centralization of authority are given extensive treatment. The election of officers in conventions often does not assure approval by the rank and file. Sometimes officers seem to hold power and to act in considerable independence of their members. The tremendous power granted to presidents—to revoke local charters, to suspend members under vague regulations, and in some cases to annul constitutional provisions—seems to be particularly dangerous and undemocratic and open to misuse by autocratic leaders. Perhaps most dangerous of all are the constitutional provisions which limit and deny the right to criticize officers and fellow members or the right to form groups to change officers or policy. The justification given by the unions for these regulations is that complete solidarity is imperative in confronting powerful employers, who are often hostile. However, the abuses possible in such a system seem to be in urgent need of correction. Another weakness which might allow entrenched leadership to continue is the low participation of members in meetings. Large percentages of members apparently do not participate actively in the affairs of many unions.

The problem of bigness, which was brought into relief by the merger of the AFL and the CIO

and which alarmed those who fear big labor is discussed. Dr. Fitch says this fear is partly due to a misapprehension. The affiliated unions have not become larger, and it is only the member unions who engage in collective bargaining. The merger has not created a monopoly in any sense that did not exist before. Only in the more unified attempts to extend organization and in the activities of education and political pressure has anything new been added. Three factors prevent the establishment of a monolithic unit of power: the diversity of interests among the unions; the countervailing power of large corporations; and the fact that two-thirds of the workers in the country are still unorganized.

Political activities of labor

Fear of the power of labor in politics is also analyzed. The notion that dictatorial leaders might control the free decision of members at the polls is probably exaggerated, since Americans vote by secret ballot. Experience shows that a unified labor vote has never materialized. The Taft-Hartley law prohibits the use of union funds in Federal political campaigns, since members might be forced to contribute to a side that they oppose. Here the author suggests that the British system might be fair, in which members would have the right to contribute support when expressly approved.

The author argues against the idea that labor has no right to engage in political activity, and this reviewer agrees with him. If farmers and business groups can take part in politics it is patently unfair to prohibit the activity of one block of Americans whose interests are also at stake. In a society which operates through pressure-groups, equilibrium of interests can be maintained only when similar privileges are granted to all.

Corruption

Urgent reforms are needed to correct the corruption and malpractices that have come to light. Union leaders have already begun to take vigorous action concerning them.

Much more stringent control seems to be necessary in regulating huge welfare funds of unions. The New York State Superintendent of Insurance and a subcommittee of the United States Senate have revealed glaring misuse of funds in a number of unions. The majority, however, were regarded as having well administered plans. In many instances business men have been partners in the malpractices. Labor leaders and the AFL-CIO are determined to drive out crooks and racketeers.

Danger of collusion between management and labor

Management may grant wage increases and pass the costs on to the public in higher prices. This creates inflation and re-

duces the buying power of other segments of the economy. Perhaps a representative of the public needs to participate in collective bargaining.

It has been charged that some unions have promoted restrictive practices in production. Several studies have shown that there is little evidence to support such charges. Some abuses still exist because of fear of running out of work.

Responsibility of Christians

This reviewer believes that as Christians we must recognize our opportunity to help labor become more responsible. All power groups tend to drive their advantages beyond the limits of justice unless their needs are balanced by the claims of others. This aspect of existence makes a strong labor movement necessary. Christians will oppose general punitive legislation and crippling restrictions because a few labor organizations are corrupt. As F. Ernest Johnson says, organized labor "has an ample ethical foundation." It is an essential part of our balanced corporate life.

Christian leaders will do well to read this book in order to understand issues that may be obscured by one-sided appraisals in discussions that are sure to come.

—ALBERT T. RASMUSSEN
Professor of Religion and
Society, Pacific School of
Religion.



TOWARD BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF LABOR AND ITS ROLE THROUGH FILMS AND LITERATURE

FILMS¹

Face of the South. *Twenty-six minutes, color, 1958; rental, \$8; from the Missions Council of the Congregational Christian Churches.*

The film, an informal chalk-talk by George Mitchell, a leading Southern economist and churchman, illuminates economic conditions and trends in the South today. On a map of the United States, he indicates four economic "regions" of the South. They transcend state boundaries and vary widely in industrial, humanitarian, and interracial development. With personal appeal and an amazing factual background, Mr. Mitchell gives a revealing analysis of the forces operating both for and against the extension of economic, and hence civil, democracy throughout the South. Both the influx of industry and the functioning of labor unions are cited as substantial aids to increased democracy between classes and

racess. To the writer, a Northerner, the film brought a wholly new realization of the importance of economic factors in the South's resistance to and gradual acceptance of new cultural and social patterns.

Produced by one denomination, the film is now being distributed by the Broadcasting and Film Commission of the National Council of Churches. It will be available for rental from religious film libraries, or for purchase from the Broadcasting and Film Commission. The discussion guide will be helpful to church groups.

With These Hands. *Fifty Minutes, 1950; rental, \$4.*

Produced by the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, this film tells the dramatic story of the Union from the days of the tragic Triangle Waist fire, through the 1926 struggle to resist Communist domination, to the present. A "feature motion picture," widely shown in commercial theatres.

Union Local. *Thirty minutes, 1951; rental, \$3.*

Produced by the U.S. State Department Overseas Informa-

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, films listed are black and white, 16 mm., and available from most local libraries. For Union-produced titles write AFL-CIO, Film Division, 815 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D. C.

tion Office, it is a popular presentation of how a local labor union functions and benefits its members.

Labor's Witness. *Thirty-three minutes, 1956; rental, \$3.*

Produced by the United Automobile Workers, it is a dramatic presentation of the testimony which Walter P. Reuther, union president, gave to a Congressional Committee concerning the UAW's political education program and the expenditure of union funds for this purpose.

Men at Work. *Twenty-seven minutes, 1954; rental, \$3.*

Produced by the National Film Board of Canada. With the background of a washing-machine factory, the film shows some of the complications in human relations that can develop on the assembly line, and pleads for more understanding of changing work situations.

Strike in Town. *Thirty-eight minutes, 1955; rental, \$4.*

Produced by the National Film Board of Canada. On the verge of a strike, the film shows the need for give and take between union and management, family disputes over the strike, and the attitudes of people in the community. The situation is typical of almost any local union or industrial community.

Work or Wages Guaranteed. *Seventeen minutes, 1955; rental, \$2.50.*

Produced by UAW to explain their guaranteed employment plan.

Technique for Tomorrow. *Twenty-five minutes, 1954; rental, \$3.*

Produced by the Ford Motor Company, the film shows automation in action at a Ford factory. It emphasizes the ways in which machines can release men from hard manual work for better and more skilled jobs.

Injustice on Trial. *Twenty minutes, 1955; rental, \$2.50.*

Produced by the AFL-CIO, the film presents labor's arguments against the so-called "right-to-work" laws. Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant clergymen also give their views on the moral issues involved.

Joe Davis, American. *Thirteen minutes, 1952; rental, \$2.50.*

Produced by the former CIO. Through the story of Joe Davis, Negro engineering student, and his struggle to find employment, labor's support for a National Fair Employment Practices law is emphasized.

The Story of the NLRB. *Twenty-three minutes, 1955; rental, \$2.50.*

Produced by Rutgers University. Workers in a textile plant seeking to form a union familiarize themselves with the procedure of the National Labor Relations Board for holding an election and handling complaints

about unfair labor practices from both management and labor.

You Are There at the Bargaining Table. *Fifty minutes*, 1955; rental, \$5.

Produced by the American Management Association. A somewhat technical but authentic record of an actual collective bargaining session, at which wage rates and methods of determining them are discussed.

Pressure Groups. *Twenty minutes*, 1952; rental, \$2.50.

Produced by Encyclopedia Britannica Films. Explains the role of pressure groups as a necessary instrument for decision-making in a democracy, and contrasts democratic and undemocratic ways of functioning.

FICTION

In this day of high wage levels, a car in every garage, and the promise of a four-day week, let us not forget the distance that has been travelled in terms of hours and conditions from "the

good old days." To refresh the memories of older readers and to enlighten younger ones, we recommend an hour or two with *Sunrise to Sunset* by Samuel Hopkins Adams (Random House, 1950); Gertrude Taber's *A Star to Steer By* (Macrae Smith, 1938); and *The Harbor* by Ernest Poole (Macmillan, 1915).

These and many other novels dealing with workers and working conditions in the U.S.A. are listed in an annotated bibliography, *The Worker in American Fiction*, recently published by the Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, University of Illinois, Champaign, Illinois. Available for \$1 per copy, this listing of stories of the worker and his problems might well be included in any church library. It should have a high place among the working equipment of a social action, industrial relations, or economic life committee.

—ELMA L. GREENWOOD, Associate Executive Director, Department of Economic Life, National Council of Churches.

We believe that responsible and democratic trade unionism is both necessary and wholesome. The individual worker in an industrial establishment can seldom express effectively his needs and desires respecting his employment. By joining in a democratic organization with fellow workers, he can present in an orderly way the demands which he feels must be made if his dignity as a worker is to be upheld.

—COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL ACTION, February, 1950.



Our God is a God of great power and love. All the resources of the earth are created and sustained by his power. Our interdependence in human society is an expression of his love at work within us. Let us worship him with humility and eagerness of heart.

Scripture readings

Matthew 6:24—God or Mammon?

Deuteronomy 22:1-4—Restore what belongs to a brother.

Isaiah 5:8-23—God's judgment on injustice.

Amos 5:7-9—Seek God and live.

Luke 4:16-21—Jesus' prophetic proclamation at Nazareth.

Matthew 25:31-46—Parable of the last judgment.

James 4:1-4—The choice: God vs. the world.

Hymns

All Creatures of Our God and King

God of Grace and God of Glory

That Cause Can Neither Be Lost nor Stayed

For the Beauty of the Earth
This Is My Father's World

A litany of prayer

O Father God, who hast created our bodies and our spirits, and knowest all our needs,

we give thee thanks for all provisions for our welfare.

For oil and coal, for water power and atomic power, and for the rich fertility of the soil,

We thank thee, our God.

For the will to work which thou hast implanted in us, and for the opportunities for mutual help,

We thank thee, our God.

For the challenge to service that we find in the suffering of our neighbors, and for the possibilities of growth through our own suffering,

We thank thee, our God.

Forgive us, O loving Father, every time we abuse thy power or fail to use our opportunities.

When others are injured because we shirk our duty or act without sensitivity,

Forgive us, O Lord.

When we exploit people who are under our command, or those who are weak and helpless,

Forgive us, O Lord.

When our sense of values is distorted, and we put material advantage ahead of spiritual concern.

Forgive us, O Lord.

O thou Ruler of the universe, grant such conversion of our wills that thy purposes may be our desires.

Bless us with thy spirit and power, we pray.

O loving Savior of our souls, grant us such love for all men that we cast off our racial, political, and private prejudices. Help us to understand and forgive the

confused and needy hearts of all our neighbors.

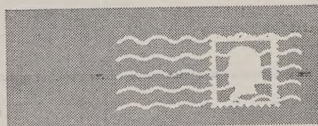
Bless us with thy spirit and power, we pray.

O Spirit of truth and guidance, give us insight to challenge evil in men and systems, and courage every hour to overcome the pressures of this world and live as dedicated disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Bless us with thy spirit and power, we pray.

—HUGO W. THOMPSON, Professor, Macalester College, St. Paul, Minn.

letters



Please send ten copies of SOCIAL ACTION for October on "Atomic Energy: Peril and Promise." We plan to make a discussion outline and send copies to association chairmen, urging them to recommend that churches discuss the subject. You have really done a great job on this issue. I know how vast and confusing the resources are; you have blended the essentials like a master. God bless you.

—REV. RALPH B. IMES
Eldora, Iowa

The November issue of SOCIAL ACTION on "Housing Without

Racial Barriers" has just come to my desk. It is good to have in one magazine so complete a report of the issues related to housing.

Over the years I have been constantly on the alert for that which our church publications might say for and in behalf of children, or to the leaders of children. I wish that your readers could know about two books for children: *The Apple Tree House* by Halladay (pupil's book, paper, \$1.25; and primary teacher's guide on "Christ, the Church and Race" by Welker, paper, 50¢); and *The Swimming Pool* by Cobb (pupil's book,

paper, \$1.25; and junior teacher's guide on "Christ, the Church and Race" by Eastman, paper, 50¢).

With every good wish to you and to the E and R people of the United Church as their vision grows through the use of SOCIAL ACTION.

—BERNICE A. BUEHLER, Formerly Director of Children's Work, Board of Christian Education and Publication, Evangelical and Reformed Church.

Would it be possible to buy one hundred copies of the No-

vember issue on "Housing Without Racial Bias"? We'd like to put it into the hands of real estate friends here.¹

—FRED H. BAGER

Kalamazoo, Michigan

Robert W. Spike's article, "Prophetic Preaching for Today," in SOCIAL ACTION for December is *very* helpful. The whole issue is outstanding. Congratulations to you.

—EDWARD L. NESTINGEN

National Student Council
of YMCAs, New York,
N. Y.

¹ NOTE: Copies are available at 25c each for 1 to 9; 20c each for 10 to 99; and 15c each for 100 or more.

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